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THE ALDINE.

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THE BOBOLINK.

ONCE, on a golden afternoon,
With radiant faces and hearts in tune,
Two fond lovers, in dreaming mood,
Threaded a rural solitude.
Wholly happy, they only knew
That the earth was bright and the sky was blue,
That light and beauty and joy and song
Charmed the way as they passed along:
The air was fragrant with woodland scents—
The squirrel frisked on the roadside fence—
And hovering near them, "Chee, chee, chink?"
Queried the curious bobolink,
Pausing and peering with sidelong head,
As saucily questioning all they said;
While the ox-eye danced on its slender stem,
And all glad nature rejoiced with them.

Over the odorous fields were strown
Wilting winrows of grass new mown,
And rosy billows of clover bloom
Surged in the sunshine and breathed perfume,
Swinging low on a slender limb,
The sparrow warbled his wedding-hymn,
And balancing on a blackberry brier,
The bobolink sung with his heart on fire—
"Chink? If you wish to kiss her, do!
Do it! do it! You coward, you!
Kiss her! kiss, kiss her! Who will see?
Only we three! we three! we three!"

Under garlands of drooping vines,
Through dim vistas of sweet-breathed pines,
Past wide meadow-fields, lately mowed,
Wandered the indolent country road.
The lovers followed it, listening still,
And, loitering slowly, as lovers will,
Entered a gray-roofed bridge that lay
Dusk and cool, in their pleasant way,
Under its arch a smooth, brown stream,
Silently glided with glint and gleam,
Shaded by graceful elms which spread,
Their verdurous canopy overhead—
The stream so narrow, the boughs so wide,
They met and mingled across the tide.
Alders loved it, and seemed to keep
Patient watch as it lay asleep,
Mirroring clearly the trees and sky,
And the flitting form of the dragon-fly,—
Save where the swift-winged swallows played
In and out in the sun and shade,
And darting and circling in merry chase,
Dipped and dimpled its clear, dark face.

Fluttering lightly from brink to brink,
Followed the garrulous bobolink,
Rallying loudly with mirthful din,
The pair who lingered unseen within,
And when from the friendly bridge at last
Into the road beyond they passed,
Again beside them the tempter went,
Keeping the thread of his argument—
"Kiss her! kiss her! chink-a-chee-chee?
I'll not mention it! Don't mind me!
I'll be sentinel—I can see
All around from this tall birch-tree!"
But ah! they noted,—nor deemed it strange—
In his rollicking chorus a trifling change—
"Do it! do it!"—with might and main
Warbled the tell-tale—"Do it again!"
—Elizabeth Akers Allen.

A CHILD'S LOVE.

(From the Italian.)

ONE beautiful afternoon in May, a child was wandering thoughtfully along the flowery banks of the Gênes, his back turned to the village and his grave eyes fixed vacantly upon the blue expanse of waters, like a troubled soul vainly seeking companionship. He appeared to be about thirteen years of age, his face was pale and sorrowful, his eyebrows strongly marked, while his dark eyes sparkled with a weird brilliancy which at times had an almost sinister expression.

He remained lost in thought for some time, his head resting upon his slim, nervous hand, listening to the murmuring waves, as they broke at his feet, gazing sadly across to the distant horizon with unutterable longing. Suddenly the joyous laughter of childhood broke upon his musings; a little girl came running across the waving field and threw both arms enthusiastically about his neck.

"Oh, you naughty, naughty Nicolo; what are you doing here? I've been looking everywhere for you!" Uttering these half-scolding words, she continued to overwhelm him with caresses, and laid a little basket filled with wild roses and eglantines at his feet, in token of her childish affection. The shadow of a smile flitted across the boy's face as he looked into her laughing eyes; he ran his fingers through her flossy curls, gave a sly, cautious look around, and whispered:

"I ran away from my father, Gianetta; he gave me leave to rest, so I came to this lovely place—you know how I value my short liberty, and how I adore the murmuring of these waves! Listen to their weird music!"

"It is too bad of your father," sighed the child, "to torment you with those hateful exercises; you will die of overwork! 'Poor Nicolo,' so mother said to me, 'is much too delicate; his bewitched violin will be the death of him before long, and it will be his father's fault!' And mother is right!" she added, looking anxiously at the young boy's worn face.

"Do not fear for me, Gianetta," replied Nicolo; "I shall not die yet; I must grow up to be a man! Look, how strong I am!" He drew himself up to his full height, his dark eyes flashed, and a smile of rare tenderness played around his ripe lips. With his strong arms he lifted his little playmate and held her suspended over the water for some seconds. Sadness does not linger long in the heart of a child! Gianetta seeing him so gay, commenced singing, pausing ever and anon for some bit of childish gossip. Nicolo listened, amused, at the artless prattle about her flowers, her doves, her games, and her dolls, and whenever he sank into an unconscious fit of abstraction, Gianetta quickly brought him to himself with a playful shake or tender kiss.

The children remained on the strand until the stars came out one after another, smiling alike on the serious eyes of Nicolo and the drowsy ones of the pretty Gianetta. Then, indeed, they turned their steps homeward, their arms wound around each other in the innocent, loving embrace of childhood. After a long walk, they turned down a narrow lane, at the end of which stood two humble cottages, overgrown with vines—one the home of Gianetta, the other of Nicolo. At the threshold of the former stood the mother of the little girl, anxiously awaiting the return of the children, whom she tenderly embraced as they came running up to her; then, wishing each other good-night, Nicolo crossed over to his home.

On entering his dingy little room, he sighed deeply, raised the window to let in the mild night air, and opening a chest, drew from it an old violin. Seating himself near the casement, through which the silvery moonlight flooded, he passed his fingers across the strings, and drew from them the most entrancing strains of music, dying away at times into wondrous melancholy, then swelling into triumphant gladness.

Scarcely had he commenced playing, when a large spider crawled out of the vines and came on the shutter.

"Welcome!" cried the young musician, gayly; and as it advanced, he laid his finger on the window sill, allowed the spider to make its way over it, and placed it in triumph upon his violin, where it remained, during the whole performance, as if enchanted by the wonderful magic of the music.

Nicolo continued practicing until his eye-lids closed in sleep, and not until the sun shone into his eyes did he awake from his sound slumbers. He arose, and replaced his mute, still sleeping companion carefully upon the vine leaves.

Every time that he laid aside his violin, when inspiration or strength failed, he sank into his habitual morbid reverie. The absence of the spider increased this feeling of solitude, for he was attached to the creature with all the passion of a fervent and unhappy disposition. His father was a hard and relentless master—his dead mother he only dimly remembered as having smiled upon him with ineffable sweetness as she sung him to sleep with her gentle lullaby. But that was so long, long ago, and now he had no friends; for the children of his own age avoided the dreamy, reserved lad. Only little Gianetta was good to him, coming often to his room and listening in silent admiration to the inspiring music of his violin. But Gianetta detested his spider. "There is witchcraft in it!" she would say, with a dainty little shudder, and so the insect was never

admitted during her visits. When his fingers grew stiff with exercise, Nicolo enlivened the hours by telling fairy tales, romantic adventures and his own hopes for the future to his delighted little companion, who would listen without daring to interrupt, her eyes gleaming with joy, as she pressed the feverish hands of the agitated narrator. Sometimes Nicolo told her of Mozart, who was already famous at the tender age of six. "Oh, Gianetta!" he would exclaim, "how small I seem beside him!" And hot tears chased down his attenuated cheeks. In vain the pitying Gianetta tried to console him—his was the jealousy common to genius!

One day the young musician, under the direction of his father, had been performing a series of monotonous exercises, so that his arms seemed paralyzed. Utterly worn out, he laid aside his violin, and leaned his weary head against the window, when all of a sudden he heard a sharp cry. It was the mother of Gianetta who called to him. Springing up with alacrity, he ran across to his playmate's home. He found the little girl lying on her bed, her form worn with a raging fever, her breath coming hard and slow, and her bright eyes looking fixedly into space. On recognizing her friend, she looked at him with a supplicating glance, which Nicolo readily interpreted. With tears in his eyes, he ran swiftly for his discarded instrument, crying as he came back:

"My sweet little Gianetta, I will play a lullaby; it will make you well again!" He sat down by her bedside, and forgetting his fatigue, played with all the fervor of his soul: his anguish, his hope, his love, seemed to breathe from the wondrous tones, and like the voices of angels descending to earth, they eased with their sublime harmony the pains of the sick child, who, at first, had listened with wild, feverish eagerness, which gradually gave place to calm repose. The restfulness of her soul was depicted upon her flushed cheeks, her little hands were clasped peacefully, as she murmured gentle prayers for her faithful friend, who with tearful eyes and nervous hands was trying to soothe the anguish of his own breaking heart as well as the pains which racked the form of his sweet little Gianetta. When he had finished playing, she held out her thin, white hand:

"Dear Nicolo," she said in a low, broken voice, "I am going to leave you. I hear sweet angels calling me. You can not follow me; you must remain behind; but far from this place, you will become famous, all the world will speak your name—oh, then, do not forget your little Gianetta!" Her head sank back among the pillows, and almost without a struggle the sweet eyes closed forever!

Nicolo remained gazing absently upon her lovely face. Alas, for the first time it was deaf to his tears and supplications. Wild with grief, he wandered about all day and the greater part of the night, without aim, without any thought save that of his utter loneliness. He visited the water-side where only a few days ago they had been so happy together; he lingered in every spot sacred to their mutual pleasures, and when at a late hour he returned to his room, he shuddered at the awful stillness which reigned there. He looked across to Gianetta's home. The window was open; he could see the child lying asleep in her narrow bed, almost hidden by the profusion of wild flowers which she had so loved while upon earth. A priest was kneeling by her side, his venerable head bowed and his trembling lips murmuring prayers for the repose of her soul. Nicolo threw himself upon his knees: "Farewell, farewell my joy, my love! As you have told me, I am going far from this place, where everything recalls my cruel loss; where I can find neither rest nor forgetfulness, deserted as I am by every creature!" At these words he trembled—something cold touched his hand. It was the spider! "Poor insect!" he cried; "the only living thing left to me! Come, I will play to you, for the last time, the airs which my poor Gianetta loved. I will play them as a requiem for her soul!"

He took out his violin. The sweet, sad strains of music flooded the air, wandering out to the little dead child, who seemed to smile at their message. Even the flowers seemed to nod their half-opened corollas, and the kneeling priest paused in his devotions to listen to the music's diviner power.

On the morrow the red rays of the sun fell across a sleeping child, still clasping his beloved instrument, on the cords of which lay a dead spider!

The hero of this little romance is Nicolo Paganini.

—E. C. Gildemeister.